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The Bureau of Land Management Service Center Newsletter May 1994

CENTER SCENE

THE BLM SUMMIT

The BLM Summit is a major consensus-building effort to convene BLM's 350 managers, to collaborate on changing land management needs and strategies.

The Summit, scheduled at Incline Village (near Reno, Nevada), April 25-28, was initiated by Acting BLM Director Mike Dombeck to focus all levels of the Bureau on improving management of the public lands.

Summit participants include all BLM field and Washington managers, Service Center Director Larry Bembry, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt, and other federal land management officials. A cross-section of BLM constituents - industry, special interest groups, professional societies, etc. - rounds out the attendance list of those working together for better public land management.

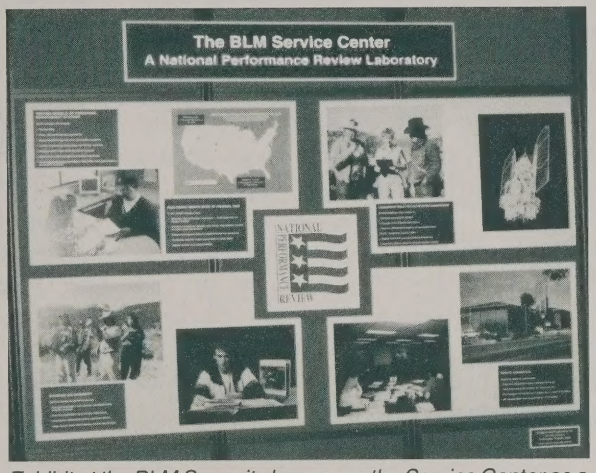

Exhibit at the BLM Summit showcases the Service Center as a National Performance Review (NPR) Laboratory

Discussions at the Summit focus on five agency objectives:

- promoting collaborative leadership,
- servicing current and future publics,
- maintaining healthy ecosystems
- diversifying BLM's workforce, and
- improving the way BLM does business.

The Summit agenda includes a case-study presentation by BLM's Research Manager and Service Center employee Bruce Van Haveren on the Ecosystem Comparison Initiative.

Service Center representation at the Summit also includes two poster sessions - one on the Service Center as a National Performance Review (NPR) Laboratory and the other on the use of remote sensing in land management decision analysis.

Editor's Note: Watch in the next issue of Center Scene for a follow-up report on what occurred at the BLM Summit.

CASE STUDY PRESENTATION

The Ecosystem Comparison Initiative is a new BLM international case study led by Service Center employee Bruce Van Haveren, who was invited along with BLM-Montana to present the project at the BLM Summit. The project reflects BLM's commitment to an ecosystem approach to managing lands and resources.

The case-study project developed after Van Haveren visited a grassland region near the China-Russia-Mongolia border that looks like eastern Montana and the western Dakotas. These Asian and American areas are similar in climate, landforms, soils, and vegetation types. One major difference is that the Asian grasslands have been grazed under a semi-nomadic system for hundreds of years and appear to be in very good ecological condition. That led Van Haveren to begin a comparison between the two areas, to find clues about managing the grasslands on an ecosystem basis.

The project involves BLM-Montana, which manages millions of acres similar to the Asian grasslands. BLM has been communicating with the Chinese government through an information exchange protocol and has also invited the Nature Conservancy to collaborate on the project. If the case-study project on grasslands is successful, BLM will likely expand the comparison concept to other arid and semiarid ecosystem types.

The Ecosystem Comparison Initiative has considerable implications for BLM. It addresses the need for international collaboration on natural resource and environmental issues. It has the potential for adding to the scientific knowledge on grassland ecosystems. And it puts the agency in a leadership position in the evolution of ecosystem management.

As BLM's Research Manager, one of Van Haveren's responsibilities is to make sure BLM has an adequate science base for its new ecosystem management approach. Ecosystem management requires that BLM know something about the ecological status and health of target ecosystems now and in the future. What are appropriate indicators of ecosystem health or ecological status? How will BLM know whether our management practices are helping or hindering ecosystem function?

BLM really doesn't know much about ecosystem health—also called ecological status—as it relates to traditional land management in the western U.S., says Van Haveren. It is imperative that BLM develop the science of ecosystem management at the same time that it develops policies and management philosophies for ecosystem management, he says.

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SIGNING OF THE SCSO BYLAWS

The Service Center Social Organization (SCSO) recently established its official bylaws, to provide all Bureau employees and contractors at the Service Center with social and recreational activities to enhance regard, health, and welfare.

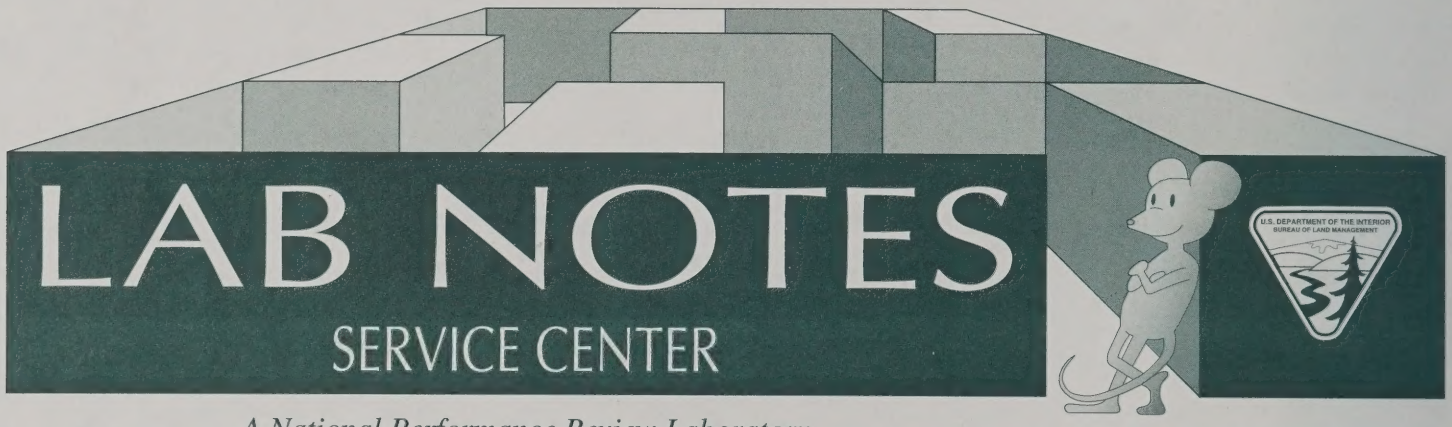
Service Center Director Larry Bembry signs the new SCSO Bylaws, while Social Organization (SCSO) Officers look on.

The SCSO operates as a non-profit organization, conducting activities through its Executive Committee: President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Vice-Presidents representing Divisions in Building 50 and 390 Union. SCSO meetings are held once a month at lunch time and last approximately one hour. These meetings are open to all Service Center employees.

During the past several years, the SCSO has sponsored picnics; bedding plant, geranium, lily and poinsettias sales; visits with Santa for employee's children; Federal Nights for baseball games (in conjunction with the Denver Federal Executive Board); ski train trips to Winter Park; and Sunday matinee shows at the Boulder Dinner Theatre.

For many years, the SCSO also sponsored "Project Santa," helping needy families and senior citizens in the area during the holidays. Unfortunately, Project Santa was cancelled last year due to the new ethics rules. The SCSO is now seeking a special ruling to start Project Santa again this year.

The annual Employee Picnic is being planned once again this year. Service Center Director, Larry Bembry, has volunteered to be our "Head Chef." For more information about SCSO activities or for copies of the new SCSO Bylaws, contact Barb Guest, 236-0120.



A National Performance Review Laboratory

Remember last fall when the Service Center was infiltrated by the National Performance Review (NPR) team asking questions and soliciting ideas for improvements in response to Vice President Gore's reinventing government effort? Well, a lot has happened since that time at the Service Center.

The Service Center was designated as a Performance Improvement Laboratory (one of six within the Department of Interior). Out of 49 recommendations made in the original NPR report, along with subsequent recommendations, 29 have been instituted. A matrix depicting these recommendations and their status is available from Donna Emmons, SC-657A.

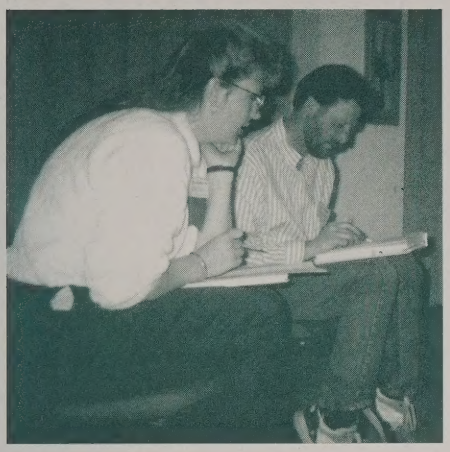
The Service Center has also established six Customer Service Strategy Teams. Each team has been empowered by the Service Center Management Team (SCMT) to analyze issues and implement resolutions to various issues. Some teams have felt frustration that ideas took longer to get action, and that more work was required than expected to implement. Team training and established charters with expected results is expected to reduce some of this frustration in the future.

The teams currently active include:

- Internal Communications (Sandy Bowers, Lead, phone 236-6646)
- Workflow/Process Improvement (Donna Emmons, Lead, phone 236-6369)
- Community Relations (Melissa Dukes, Lead, phone 236-6689)
- Mission and Organization (Linda Sedbrook, Lead, phone 236-6503)
- Employee Needs (Joe Kuka, Lead, phone 236-6635)
- External Communications (Pam Clemmer, Lead, phone 236-0824)

These teams have spent many hours outlining their objectives and working procedures. Many are getting ready to convert to standing committees and will be requesting suggestions and/or assistance from all Service Center employees. If you have any questions about the various teams feel free to contact the Lead individual named above. Look for more details in the near future on each of the Customer Service Strategy Teams. We will all see and feel many changes in the future!

ROCKY MOUNTAIN VOLUNTEER CONFERENCE



Conference participants Dangoule Bockus and Mark Maskill of the Fish and Wildlife Service collaborate on Large Project Logistics during a workshop session.

The 1994 Rocky Mountain Volunteer Conference was held April 5-8 in Estes Park for natural resource agencies within the Rocky Mountain region. The purpose of the conference was collaboration among participants, to maximize the use of volunteer resources across agency boundaries.

The BLM Service Center and Colorado and Wyoming State Offices hosted the conference, in partnership with the Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, National Park Service, Colorado Division of Wildlife, and Colorado State Parks.

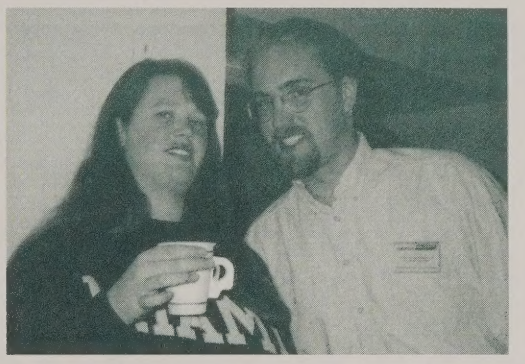
Over 60 people participated in the conference from Federal and state agencies to professional volunteer management organizations. Two Service Center employees - Eva Thomas, Division of Finance; and Melissa Dukes, Division of Personnel - participated as workshop presenters.

Workshop topics included Partnerships in the '90's, Creative Funding, Recruitment, the National and Community Service Trust Act, Volunteer Management as a Collateral Duty, and Conflict Resolution. One session on Large Project Logistics covered an upcoming BLM project on the Uncompahgre RiverWay boardwalk. This project is scheduled for September.

Volunteers play an important role in the BLM. In 1992, BLM employed approximately 11,000 employees and utilized the services of over 22,000 volunteers. Volunteers may contribute 4 hours or 400 hours to clean-up riparian areas, serve as campground hosts, build trails, answer phones, and develop computer programs. They can and do participate in almost every BLM program.

BLM Volunteers range from Cub Scout troops and college students desiring career-related experience to retirees who want to become involved in public service. BLM also uses Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) participants to manage the Resource Apprenticeship Program for Students (RAPS) at the state level. Occasionally BLM employees volunteer for projects outside their job duties to experience a different part of land management.

If you would like more information on the Volunteer Program or the Uncompahgre project, contact Melissa Dukes, Recruitment Coordinator, SC-631, at 236-6689.



Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) members, Barbara Martin (BLM Colorado) and Timothy Johansen participate in the Rocky Mountain Volunteer Conference.

ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT - A NEW WAY OF THINKING

By now, everyone has heard that the Bureau of Land Management is embarking on a change of philosophy regarding the management of public lands. The words "ecosystem management" are being used in connection with almost every subject that is discussed. But what is this thing called ecosystem management and what is the Service Center doing to prepare itself to support this effort?

Ecosystem management is a different way of thinking about the resources that the Bureau manages. Ecosystem management looks at caring for the land by protecting, maintaining, or restoring the ecological integrity of its physical and biological processes, such as soil, water, air, and biological diversity. This management process is implemented while simultaneously serving compatible economic, political, cultural, and social needs at various geographic levels. Ecosystem management requires that the focus of management be on the natural processes first and on commodities and uses second. With healthy and sustainable natural processes, the Bureau will be able to produce the commodities and uses that the American public requires.

The Service Center is going through a period of adaptation in which it will become organized to best address issues in ways consistent with ecosystem management. The most important change is the recognition that issues and operations must be viewed from a perspective of natural systems and not individual resource disciplines and commodities. Therefore, the Service Center will bring together all of the technical disciplines necessary to provide this interdisciplinary look at issues and activities.

Recently, the name of the Division of Resource Services was changed to the Division of Applied Resource Sciences to better reflect how we will approach our mission in support of ecosystem management. In addition, the merger of parts of the Division of Technical Services with the Division of Applied Resource Sciences brings together the necessary disciplines to form a pool of expertise that will address the issues and projects of the future.

Other changes are also occurring. The Division of Applied Resource Sciences will operate under the concept of matrix management. Under this concept, teams will be established from the pool of expertise available within the Division and from other parts of the Service Center and the Bureau. The teams will be comprised of the technical disciplines necessary to address the issue or assignment in an interdisciplinary mode.

By taking these actions, the Service Center will be ready to meet the challenge of doing business in a new way - Ecosystem Management.

UNION NEWS

Listed below are the current union officials and their telephone numbers:

President	Sandi Neff	SC-610	236-6327
Vice-President	Mimi Hillen	SC-673	969-5666
Vice-President	Toni Fitzwater	DWO-450	236-0629
Secretary	VACANT		
Treasurer	Mac Goding	SC-675	236-6359
Chief Steward	Dave Droullard	SC-672	236-4185
Steward	LaVeda Smith	SC-657	236-6485
Steward	Joe McDowell	SC-616	236-7121
Steward	Judy Bowers	DWO-445	236-0950
Steward	Ethylene Crenshaw	DWO-452	236-8012

Please feel free to contact any of the people listed above.

Newly elected Union officials, (l to r), LaVeda Smith, Ethylene Crenshaw, Dave Droullard, and Mac Goding.

PERSONNEL NEWS

New

Kurtis J. Ballentine, DWO-430, Project Analyst
Ruth A. Bolz, SC-616, Voucher Examiner
Janet B. Sullivan, SC-120, Equal Employment Manager

Leaving

E. Denise Brown, SC-616, Voucher Examiner
Cynthia R. Hall, SC-673, Office Automation Clerk
Tina LaGrange, SC-657, Student Trainee (Duplicating Equipment Operator)
Stephanie J. McNamara, SC-140, Student Trainee (Visual Information)
Kelly K. Staggs, SC-653, Library Aid

SIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES OFFERED TO EMPLOYEES

During 1992 and 1993, 60 Service Center employees were trained in American Sign Language, through three courses offered by the Disabled Employment Program, under the Service Center's Equal Employment Office. This training allows hearing employees to communicate on a conversational level with hearing-impaired employees.

"It makes the working relationship easier," said Disabled Employment Program Manager Sandy Dilbeck, "as opposed to writing notes, which is very time consuming."

Currently, two Service Center employees, Sherri Johnson (SC-657) and Dario Quinones (SC-343E), are teaching a 10-week sign language course to BLM employees at the Colorado State Office. The course is taught in 1-hour sessions, 2 days a week.

Another sign language course may be held at the Service Center this fall, if there is enough employee interest. For further information, contact Sandy Dilbeck, 236-6546.

WIN-WIN TRAINING FOLLOW-UP

The Labor-Management Relations Training, known as "WIN-WIN" and held in February, led to a March 28 follow-up meeting between the Service Center Management Team (SCMT) and NFFE Union Local 1945.

The meeting included a review of listening skills and the problem-solving process. As in the February meeting, members of management and the Union worked together to solve a hypothetical problem.

Status reports were also given on the review of unfair labor practices; the dissemination of "WIN-WIN" information to all employees; and the return to the Labor-Management Relations Committee meeting format, including the discussion of issues before they become problems, Union representation on the SCMT, and plans for training on the new Union contract.

It was mutually agreed by Labor and Management that "WIN-WIN" training has been successful in beginning the rapid development of a working partnership.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- The SCSO Annual Bedding Plant Sale will be held May 5 in front of Building 50, from 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.
- The Denver Federal Center "Cinco de Mayo" Celebration will be held on **Friday, May 6**, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:45 p.m., at Building 25, Lecture Halls A & B; Building 41, Cafeteria; and Building 40, south front lawn area.